

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04763 01 OF 03 232017Z
ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CG-00 COME-00 EPAE-00 AID-05
FDRE-00 CEQ-01 CIAE-00 SOE-02 DODE-00 EB-08
INR-10 IO-14 L-03 NSF-02 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-05
USIA-15 SS-15 SP-02 DOE-15 INT-05 DOTE-00 DLOS-09
JUSE-00 PA-02 SIL-01 LAB-04 /143 W
-----108681 232041Z /43

R 231849Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4534
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY MADRID

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 04763

DEPARTMENT PASS USCG, NOAA, EPA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, SENV, IMCO, UK, FR

SUBJECT: AMOCO CADIZ OIL SPILL AND IMCO

REF: (A) PARIS 9771; (B) PARIS 9822

1. THE GROUNDING (REPORTED REFTEL A) OF THE U.S. OWNED,
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PAGE 02 LONDON 04763 01 OF 03 232017Z

LIBERIAN REGISTERED TANKER AMOCO CADIZ MARCH 16 ON THE
EVE OF THE FIRST OBSERVANCE OF WORLD MARITIME DAY BY
IMCO (THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL MARITIME CONSULTATIVE OR-
GANIZATION, A UN SPECIALIZED AGENCY) AND ITS MEMBER
STATES HAS RAISED A HOST OF TECHNICAL AND LEGAL QUESTIONS
WHICH ARE LIKELY TO HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THE JUNE IMCO
CONFERENCE ON TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OF SEAFARERS

AND MAY POSSIBLY CREATE NEW WORK WITHIN IMCO ON RULES OF LAW RELATING TO ASSISTANCE AND SALVAGE AT SEA AND ON POLLUTION LIABILITY. AN OFFICIAL IN THE UK DEPARTMENT OF TRADE OPERATIONS CENTER FOR THE DISASTER ESTIMATED THAT AS OF MARCH 22 ONLY ONE-QUARTER OF THE VESSELS TANKS, HOLDING LESS THAN 60,000 OF ITS ORIGINAL CARGO OF 220,000 TONS OF CRUDE OIL, HAD NOT BEEN PUNCTURED. BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUING HIGH WINDS AND BAD WEATHER, HE DOUBTED THAT ANY OF THE OIL COULD BE PUMPED OUT BEFORE ALL THE TANKS HAD BROKEN OPEN.

2. LONDON NEWSPAPERS HAVE REPORTED CONSIDERABLE DISPUTE ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH THE OIL. THE FRENCH REPORTEDLY HAVE MADE SOME LIMITED USE OF CHEMICAL DISPERSANTS ON THE SOUTHERN TAIL OF THE SLICK AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE BREST CHANNEL, BUT THEY HAVE GENERALLY AVOIDED USE OF CHEMICAL DISPERSANTS FOR FEAR OF DAMAGING FISH AND SHELLFISH. THEY HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO PROTECT OYSTER BEDS IN INLETS NORTH OF PORTSALL WITH INFLATABLE RUBBER BARRIERS ACROSS THE MOUTHS OF THE INLETS, BUT OIL IS SEEPING UNDER THEM AND THE BEDS ARE EXPECTED TO BE POLLUTED TO SOME EXTENT. THE FRENCH HAVE REPORTEDLY CHOSEN TO WAIT UNTIL THE OIL POLLUTION HAS REACHED ITS MAXIMUM LIMITS BEFORE UNDERTAKING A MASSIVE FINAL CLEANUP. THE BRITISH ARE USING CHEMICAL DISPERSANTS ON THE NORTHERN AND NORTHWEST EDGES OF THE SLICK WHERE UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 LONDON 04763 01 OF 03 232017Z

ANY TAR RESIDUES WILL SINK INTO DEEP WATER. THEY ARE HOLDING SHIPS AND STOCKS OF DISPERSANTS IN PLYMOUTH AND OTHER CHANNEL PORTS AND IN THE CHANNEL ISLANDS IN THE EVENT A SHIFT OF WIND AND WEATHER STARTS TO MOVE THE SLICK TOWARDS THE SOUTH COAST OR THE CHANNEL ISLANDS. ESTIMATES ARE THAT UP TO TWO-FIFTHS OF THE OIL IS EVAPORATING AND THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AROUND PORTSALL IS SUFFERING FROM HYDROCARBON GAS AIR POLLUTION. A TECHNICAL EXPERT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TANKER OWNERS' POLLUTION FEDERATION, CAPT. MICHAEL GARRETT, WHO IS ON THE SCENE, IS REPORTED AS PREDICTING THAT THE SEA ITSELF WILL TAKE CARE OF THE OIL IN A VERY SHORT TIME AND THAT BY JUNE BRITTANY'S BEACHES AND ROCKS WILL BE QUITE CLEAN. HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "THE BEST THING WOULD BE TO LEAVE IT TO GOD."

3. WHY THE AMOCO CADIZ GOT INTO TROUBLE AND THEN WAS ALLOWED TO GO AGROUND IS STILL NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR FROM THE NEWSPAPERS AND PROBABLY WILL NOT BE UNTIL THE FRENCH HOLD THEIR INQUIRY AND THE "FULL-SCALE FORMAL INQUIRY" TO BE ORDERED BY THE COMMISSION FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS FOR LIBERIA HAS BEEN COMPLETED--IT HAS BEGUN A PRELIMINARY

INVESTIGATION IN ROTTERDAM. ALTHOUGH A STEERING GEAR FAILURE STARTED THE CHAIN OF EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE DISASTER, MR. HARRY RINKEMA, AN AMOCO VICE-PRESIDENT, IS REPORTED AS STATING THAT THE STEERING GEAR ON THE SHIP ALREADY MET THE NEW STANDARDS ESTABLISHED BY THE FEBRUARY 1978 IMCO TANKER SAFETY AND POLLUTION PREVENTION CONFERENCE, THAT IT WAS EQUIPPED WITH TWIN MOTORS AND TWIN PUMPS, BUT HAD ONLY A SINGLE HYDRAULIC

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04763 02 OF 03 232026Z

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-----108961 232040Z /45

R 231849Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4535

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 03 LONDON 04763

SYSTEM AND THAT WAS WHAT FAILED. SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD NOT APPEAR TO HAVE MET THE NEW IMCO REQUIREMENTS. THE TUG PACIFIC REPORTEDLY ARRIVED ALONGSIDE THE TANKER

AT 1220 AND HAD A LINE ABOARD AT 1315. THE LINE IS
SAID TO HAVE BROKEN AT 1615. LONDON NEWSPAPERS ARE
QUESTIONING WHAT THE TUG WAS DOING DURING THE THREE-HOUR
INTERVAL. ONE PAPER CLAIMS THAT THE TUG SIMPLY LAY
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PAGE 02 LONDON 04763 02 OF 03 232026Z

ALONGSIDE AND DID NOTHING. THE SPECULATION, SUPPORTED
BY SOME CRYPTIC REMARKS OF MR. RINKEMA OF AMOCO, WAS
THAT THE TUG AND TANKER CAPTAINS WERE HAGGLING OVER THE
TERMS OF A CONTRACT FOR THE TUG'S SERVICES. ANOTHER
PAPER ASSERTS THAT THE TANKER CAPTAIN SHOULD HAVE
ORDERED OUT THREE TUGS. THE IMPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE
THAT AMOCO WAS PENNY-WISE AND POUND-FOOLISH.

4. CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN IN THE NEWS-
PAPERS AND IN THE PARLIAMENT AND THE HOUSE OF LORDS TO
QUESTIONS OF INSURANCE COVER AND LIABILITY. THE U.K.
GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH THE U.K. HAS NOT BEEN DIRECTLY
AFFECTED, HAS GONE TO CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE IN PREPOSI-
TIONING SUPPLIES OF CHEMICAL DISPERSANTS AND FOR ALMOST
A WEEK HAS HAD TEN SHIPS INVOLVED OR ON STANDBY TO
DEAL WITH THE OIL SLICK. AMOCO CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE
ALMOST 20 MILLION POUNDS TO PAY FOR CLEANUP AND
INDEMNIFICATION. HOWEVER, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE FUZZI-
NESS, EVEN AMONG U.K. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, ABOUT WHAT
CLAIMS THE INSURERS WILL HONOR. THE POLLUTION IN-
SURANCE OF TANKERS IS OPERATED THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL
TANKER OWNERS POLLUTION FEDERATION (ITOPF) ON THE BASIS
OF TWO SCHEMES. TOVALOP (TANKER
OWNERS' VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT CONCERNING THE LIMITATION
OF POLLUTION) SET THE AMOUNT PAYABLE AT \$100 PER GROSS
TON WITH A MAXIMUM PAYABLE OF \$10 MILLION. THIS WAS
LATER SUPPLEMENTED BY AN OIL COMPANIES' ARRANGEMENT
WHICH IN COMBINATION WITH TOVALOP RAISED THE MAXIMUM
PAYABLE TO \$30 MILLION, CRISTAL (CONTRACT REGARDING
INTERIM SUPPLEMENT TO TANKER LIABILITY FOR OIL POL-
LUTION). TANKER OWNERS MET MARCH 20 IN THE WAKE OF THE
AMOCO CADIZ SPILL TO CONSIDER RAISING TOVALOP'S MAXIMUM
TO \$16.8 MILLION IN LINE WITH THE PRESENT VALUE OF THE
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PAGE 03 LONDON 04763 02 OF 03 232026Z

MAXIMUM UNDER THE IMCO 1969 CIVIL LIABILITY FOR OIL
POLLUTION CONVENTION AND THIS REPORTEDLY WAS APPROVED.
CRISTAL ITSELF COULD BE INSTITUTIONALIZED IF THE IMCO
1971 FUND CONVENTION FOR COMPENSATION FOR OIL POLLUTION
DAMAGE WERE RATIFIED BY SUFFICIENT GOVERNMENTS TO COME

INTO FORCE. IMCO MEMBER STATES WILL BE WATCHING HOW EFFECTIVELY COMPENSATION IS DISTRIBUTED IN THE AMOCO CADIZ CASE AND WHETHER THE TOTAL LIABILITY COVERAGE IS SUFFICIENTLY HIGH.

5. AS WOULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, THE ITF (INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION) AND THE U.K. NATIONAL UNION OF SEAMEN HAVE FOCUSED COMMENT ON THE FACT THAT THIS IS A LIBERIAN FLAG OF CONVENIENCE TANKER AND HAVE QUESTIONED THE COMPETENCE OF THE CREW. HOWEVER THE LONDON TIMES IN ITS EDITORIAL OF MARCH 20 ALSO FOCUSES ON THE CREW PROBLEM AND CONCLUDES "IT IS ALREADY APPARENT THAT THE HUMAN ELEMENT PLAYED A CONSIDERABLE PART, NOT LEAST IN THE CONSIDERABLE TIME-WASTING WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE OCCURRED AT VARIOUS STAGES. THE IMCO CONFERENCE ON TANKER CREWS THEREFORE ASSUMES GREAT IMPORTANCE."

6. IN PARLIAMENT, BOTH A LABOR AND A CONSERVATIVE MP CRITICIZED VESSELS OF THE TONNAGE OF THE AMOCO CADIZ

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 03 LONDON 04763

HAVING ONLY A SINGLE SCREW AND SUGGESTED SETTING A
TARGET DATE FOR BANNING SUCH VESSELS FROM EEC WATERS.
THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN SUGGESTIONS, AS IN REFTEL B, THAT
LARGE CRUDE TANKERS SHOULD FOLLOW PRESCRIBED SEA LANES
WELL OFF DANGEROUS SHOAL WATERS. RIGAS DOGANIS, DIREC-
TOR OF THE TRANSPORT STUDIES GROUP OF THE LONDON POLY-
TECHNIC AND THE SENIOR AUTHOR OF A 1976 REPORT ON FLAGS
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PAGE 02 LONDON 04763 03 OF 03 232017Z

OF CONVENIENCE, QUESTIONED WHY SHIPPING SHOULD NOT BE
CONTROLLED AS TIGHTLY AS AIRLINE TRAFFIC INCLUDING
STRONG SANCTIONS AGAINST CAPTAINS WHOSE SHIPS VIOLATE
THE RULES.

7. THE MOST CRITICAL ATTENTION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN GIVEN
TO THE APPARENT HAGGLING OVER THE TUG CONTRACT TERMS.
NEWSPAPERS AND PRIVATE COMMENTS BY IMCO AND U.K.
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAKE THE POINT THAT IT IS OUT-
RAGEOUS THAT SUCH AN ARGUMENT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ALLOWED
TO PUT AT RISK THE LIVELIHOOD AND WAY OF LIFE OF THE
PEOPLE ON THE BRITTANY COAST. THE ISSUE OF RULES FOR
ASSISTANCE AND SALVAGE AT SEA MAY BE INTRODUCED INTO THE
IMCO. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE EMBASSY NOTES THE EXIS-
TENCE OF THE CONVENTION FOR THE UNIFICATION OF CERTAIN
RULES OF LAW RELATING TO ASSISTANCE AND SALVAGE AT SEA
SIGNED AT BRUSSELS ON 23 SEPTEMBER 1910.

8. EMBASSY IS POUCHING COPIES OF NEWSPAPER CLIPPING
ON THE AMOCO CADIZ SPILL TO IO/TRC, EB/MA, AND THE
USCG.

STREATOR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MARINE TRANSPORTATION, POLLUTION CONTROL, OIL SPILLS, AMOCO CADIZ, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780129-0012
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
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Litigation History:
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Reference: 78 PARIS 9771, 78 PARIS 9822
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Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
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Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3227196
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMOCO CADIZ OIL SPILL AND IMCO
TAGS: EWWT, SENV, UK, FR, US, IMCO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cf331fbf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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